

## CANADA

IN MEMORY | MAY 2020

### Dr. Jerald D. Johnson

August 16, 1927 ~ April 28, 2020



Born the son of a Nazarene pastor on the prairies of Nebraska, Jerald D. Johnson entered the world on August 16, 1927. From the moment of his birth in a parsonage until the moment of his last breath of natural causes (non COVID related) on April 28, 2020, his life was marked by love for God, for his family, and service in and through the church. Even in his early years, his character evidenced a spirit of optimism, entrepreneurship, and a little bit of entertainment. Full of creative energy, young Jerry participated in the band, played the violin, and sang and acted in the school plays. He retained his childhood friendships throughout his life, taking time from his travels to visit with acquaintances along the way.

Ever a little mischievous, he is remembered for some of the jokes that he played on classmates and co-workers. After placing fireworks under a college president's bed at a teen camp, he felt compelled to attend Northwest Nazarene College, now Northwest Nazarene University. At age 18, he traveled from Nebraska to Idaho, courtesy of the Union Pacific Railroad where he had worked as a caller during high-school, awakening the crews in the middle of the night throughout the war years. At NNC he excelled in the development of relationships and fanned the flames of the passion for ministry that was growing within him. It was while attending NNC that he met and fell in love with Alice, who became his partner for life and ministry. They became a team that remained inseparable until she died in 2019. Later in life, NNC would award him the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

Jerry and Alice were on staff in Spokane, Washington, and pastored churches in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Eugene, Oregon until they answered the call of the church to become pioneer missionaries to Germany in 1958. Engaged in the work of the Nazarene Young Peoples' Society (NYPS), Jerry frequently traveled and was a popular camp speaker. The move to Germany, along with their two young sons, Jerry, Jr., and Dennis, became a defining moment in their lives.

Jerry worked hard to learn the language, spending hours in study and even sleeping with a tape recorder running throughout the night so that he could become fluent in German. The hard work paid off as he was able to preach and teach in the language, even in his retirement years.

Throughout his years in Germany, Jerry would partner with others to see churches planted in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. The organization of a Bible College that began in the basement of the church they had planted in Frankfurt, Germany, would become what today is known as European Nazarene College. Their eleven years of service in Europe would leave an indelible impression upon Jerry and the entire family, including Kurt and Carla, who were born in Germany.

A forward thinker, Jerry took his responsibility in the church very seriously. Concerned about the future development of the church in Europe, he offered to leave, if that vacancy would make room for the development of national leadership. This decision became another one of those defining moments in his life as he chose to leave the work that he loved, for the sake of the mission. He vowed that if God ever gave him a chance to be an architect of change in the missional structures of the church, he would embrace the opportunity. Just four years after leaving the mission field, God gave him that chance.

After returning to the United States and serving pastorates at Cambrian Park Church of the Nazarene in San Jose, California, and College Church of the Nazarene in Nampa, Idaho, Jerry was elected the director of the World Missions Division of the Church of the Nazarene. It was in this role that he built upon the revolutionary work of Dr. E.S. Phillips and began to create the blueprint for the process of Internationalization in the Church of the Nazarene. After serving for seven years in this position, in 1980 he was elected to the highest office in the Church of the Nazarene, General Superintendent. Along the way, he authored 12 books and contributed frequently to church periodicals.

Dr. Johnson served the church as a General Superintendent for 17 years, traveling to 160 countries in the world, preaching and encouraging the church to fulfill her mission to reach the whole world for Jesus Christ. In his retirement years, he returned to pastoral ministry, serving as an interim pastor in many locations, including the Hugelstrasse Church of the Nazarene in Frankfurt, Germany. Upon their return to the United States in retirement, Dr. Johnson pastored the Valley Shepherd Church of the Nazarene in Meridian, Idaho where he led the campaign and building project for the new church building. He called it a joy to worship with this church community the remainder of his years.

While his accomplishments are great, he will always be remembered for his spirit. He was ever the optimist who found joy in creativity and entrepreneurship, finding unique ways to continue funding the work of the church. During a particularly difficult season, he had pins made that simply had the letters, "ICBD"—that stood for, "It Can Be Done!" His enthusiasm and positivity were infectious, believing it was important always to leave things better than the way he had found them.

Jerry was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather. Every member of the family knew that they were dearly loved and were remembered regularly in prayer. With a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, he enjoyed every visit, and of course, used the opportunity to have some chocolate or ice cream. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of “70 and a half years,” Alice; his son, Jerry, Jr., as well as his sisters, Ardith Wolstenholm and Shirley Johnson. He is survived by his sons, Dennis (Kathy) Johnson and Kurt (Melissa) Johnson; his daughter, Carla (Chuck) Sunberg; as well as grandchildren, Robert Johnson, Melanie (Jeff) Pollack, Misty (Jon) Johnson, Matthew Johnson, Carmen Johnson, Hilary (Paul) Swideki, Sarah Johnson, Alex (Ashleigh) Johnson, Christa (Iain) Maciver, and Cara (Justin) Shonamon, and fourteen great-grandchildren.

Because of the Coronavirus, a private interment will be held with family members only. A memorial service will be held at the Valley Shepherd Church of the Nazarene in Meridian at a later date. An online guest book is available at [www.nampafuneralhome.com](http://www.nampafuneralhome.com) Memorials can be made to the Jerald and Alice Johnson Scholarship at Nazarene Theological Seminary, 1700 E. Meyer Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64131, or on the following link:

<https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/NazareneTheologicalSeminary/supportnts.html>

**Please note** “*the Jerald and Alice Johnson Scholarship*” in the comments section of the link



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